Talk to your healthcare professional if you have any questions or concerns.

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About Antibiotics

The ARK Hospital Antibiotic Review Kit

ANTIBIOTIC REVIEW KIT

Taking antibiotics when you don't need to or taking them for too long can be unsafe for the future. This leaflet explains why.

When do we use antibiotics?

- **Antibiotics fight infections** caused by **bacteria**, but not all infections are caused by bacteria.
- When you first see a healthcare professional, such as a doctor, nurse or pharmacist, it can be **too early** for them to be sure of what is causing your illness. They may start antibiotics ***"just in case"***.
- A 3-day course of antibiotics is enough to treat many common infections.

What are the risks of taking antibiotics?

Taking antibiotics kills **natural 'good' bacteria** in your body, which help keep you healthy. Taking antibiotics causes the bacteria that your body carries to become **"resistant"** to antibiotics, meaning that common antibiotics don't work anymore.

The more antibiotics you take the more likely you are:

- to **carry antibiotic resistant bacteria in your body** – which can be passed on to others such as your family, friends and pets;
- to have antibiotic resistant infections in the future. When this happens, antibiotics **will work less well** or not at all.

Antibiotics can cause **side effects** (such as diarrhoea, rashes, feeling sick), which in rare cases can be **very severe** (spasm of the airways or collapse).

What will my healthcare professional do?

When healthcare professionals prescribe antibiotics ***"just in case"***, they will "**review"** your response to treatment carefully.

- **At review**, if your healthcare professional decides that the **illness isn't caused by bacteria**, they will **stop** antibiotics.
- When your healthcare professional has **your test results** they can **decide how long** you need antibiotics for and **which ones you need**.
- Your healthcare professional may also decide that you **need to carry on** with the antibiotics you had before, because they are working well.

Regular **review** of antibiotic prescriptions helps to make sure that you only take the antibiotics **you really need to make you better**.

What should I do when the antibiotics stop?

Tell your healthcare professional if:

- your **fever goes up again;**
- your **symptoms come back.**

They can always **restart your treatment** if needed.